

# 10 Steps to a Healthier You

## Step 10: Eat mindfully

If you think that eating only happens when you are hungry, and that you stop when you are full..... then scientists and marketers know better! Many things influence how much we eat; plate size, food placement, what you are doing at the time, type of food and how quickly we eat are but some. If you want to eat in a way that looks after your health and weight, it is important to eat mindfully.

Mindfulness is about being in the present and savouring the moment. Mindful eating is about eating slowly and getting the maximum satisfaction from the process. It is the opposite to the high speed, guilt-charged way many of us eat today where it is almost as if eating quickly will absolve the guilt associated with unhealthy food choices! A good example of this is the chocolate bar that you purchase while doing the supermarket shopping and eat before you get home. Quickly throw away the wrapper and it's as if you have not had it in the first place!

### What is eating mindfully?

Mindful eating is about truly engaging in the process of eating; it is about eating consciously, slowly and enjoying the process whatever the food. If you are going to eat a piece of chocolate cake for example, it's a crime if you do not take the time to enjoy it!

### Eat consciously

**Keep a food diary.** This helps you understand when, why and how you eat. Do this for at least 5 days (including 2 weekend days). See template on page 3 of this resource. Once you identify your vulnerable foods and times, think about healthier strategies for addressing them.

### Make a list of foods and drinks that may not benefit your health and weight.

Divide these into ones that you could do without (low sacrifice foods) and those you could not do without (high sacrifice foods). Think about substituting healthier options for low sacrifice foods (e.g. it may be no sacrifice to use light cream cheese rather than butter in a sandwich) while allowing some of the high sacrifice foods in your diet. The trick with the high sacrifice foods is to get satisfied with less of them. This is where eating slowly and mindfully comes in (see tips next page).

### Create trade-offs or food policies for yourself.

Tell yourself "I can have dessert only if I go for a 30 minute walk first" OR  
 "I will only eat fruit as a snack at work. In the weekend however, I can have a couple of biscuits" OR  
 "I can eat whenever I want to, but I will always put the food on a plate and sit down to eat it"

### Create a healthy food environment at home

Fill your fridge and pantry with healthy foods. If you don't have unhealthy foods at hand, you will not be tempted.

### Eat slowly

It takes the brain 20 minutes to register fullness. Fast eaters can pack away a huge number of kilojoules in this time, particularly if they are eating kilojoule dense fast or processed foods. They get overfull before their body has time to catch up. The majority of overweight people eat most of their excess kilojoules each day in this 20 minute period, particularly in the evening.

**Try eating slowly and see how much easier it is to eat less!**



**REMEMBER: FULLNESS IS THE ULTIMATE APPETITE SUPPRESSANT!**



## Get full on less

- § Sit down to eat
- § Always put food on a plate.
- § Use a small plate; the speed we eat is influenced by portion size. Bigger servings are eaten faster.
- § Minimise distractions – turn off the TV or radio so you can concentrate on the process of eating
- § Tune in with your senses; enjoy the sight and smell of the food as well as the taste
- § Be the last person to start eating, and try to be the last person to finish
- § Chew each mouthful until there is no more flavour left. Remember, there are no taste buds in your stomach, so swallowing before you have extracted all flavour is a waste of taste!
- § Put your implements down between each mouthful and focus on the sensations in your mouth. Think of the taste, texture and mouthfeel of everything you eat
- § Use a teaspoon for cakes or desserts and take tiny mouthfuls
- § Eat chocolate slowly and savour each tiny piece. Remember, the most enjoyment comes from the first few mouthfuls so put some away for later!
- § Use chopsticks with asian dishes; if you are not an expert, this will definitely slow you down
- § If you feel as if you have room for more when your plate is empty, wait 5 minutes before serving yourself more
- § PRACTICE ALL OF THE ABOVE – focus on one goal at a time and make a conscious effort until it becomes habit. Involve all of your household and make a fun game of it!

**My Goal:**

### **Appetite For Life**

A 6 week Healthy Lifestyle and Weight Management Programme for Women.  
For more information contact your GP



